



Guidance on Applying for Fife Cultural Trust Vacancies

How to apply for Fife Cultural Trust Posts

Applications should be submitted by the advertised closing date. Late applications cannot be accepted. Please note that, in the interests of equality, we do not accept Curriculum Vitae (CVs).

Please note that our application forms are post specific and you will need to complete a separate Application Form for each job title that you wish to apply for. Please also note that we do not keep applications on file for future vacancies.

Applications and Equal Opportunities Monitoring forms must be returned by email to recruitment.fct@onfife.com, unless alternative previously agreed, and will be acknowledged on receipt. These must be in Microsoft Word format. Scanned documents will not be accepted.

Please ensure you state any qualifications you have achieved which match the essential criteria for the post e.g. SVQ, professional qualification.

We will contact you via the email address you supply on your application, so it is important that you check your email account regularly. If you do not have an email address, you can sign-up for a free account through internet providers such as Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail. Free internet access is available from all public libraries in Fife.

Selection Process

The selection process for this post comprises shortlisting and interview. Before any firm offer of employment can be made, you will be asked to complete a Criminal Convictions Declaration Form and a Pre-Employment Fit for Work Questionnaire. For some posts, PVG Scheme Membership will be required. Also, we are legally required to ensure that you are eligible to work in this country and you will be asked to provide appropriate evidence. If you are selected for interview, you will be required to produce identification (originals) to show that you are permitted to work in the UK in accordance with the Immigration Asylum and Nationality Act 2006. If you are not currently entitled to work in the UK, we advise that you visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk for further information about working in the UK.

Please note that new employees to Fife Cultural Trust will be subject to a probationary period of six months.

Internal Applicants - References

Internal applicants need only provide one referee, who must be at grade FC8 or above. A list of staff at this grade will be sent out as part of the application pack.

Information for applicants with disabilities

If you require it, we will arrange to have the application form made available in other formats such as tape, Braille or large print, but please email recruitment.fct@onfife.com or telephone 08451 55 55 55 ext 472793 to let us know in plenty of time, as we may need to ask for assistance from other agencies. Please contact us if there is any other assistance you require.

Disability Confident

Fife Cultural Trust, holds Level 2 recognition for Disability Confident as it is committed to employing and supporting disabled people.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Amended Regulations 2005 define disability as follows: “any physical or mental impairment which has a substantial adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

Should you wish to be considered under this scheme, please confirm on the Application Form that you have a disability. All disabled candidates who meet the minimum essential criteria for a job vacancy will be guaranteed an interview. You may be asked about your disability at interview and discuss whether reasonable adjustments may be required.

Guidance on Answering Competency Based Questions using the STAR Approach

Overview

FCT Application Forms and Interviews are both competency based. In order to answer the competency based questions on the application form or in interview as completely as possible, it is suggested that you may wish to utilise the STAR approach. This will help you to ensure that you answer competency based questions as fully as possible and in as structured a way as possible, and, consequently, ensure that we have the most comprehensive information by which to assess your suitability for a particular opportunity.

What are Competency-based questions / interviews?

Competency based questions / interviews are more systematic than other questions/ interviews, with each question targeting a specific skill or competency. Candidates are asked questions relating to their behaviour in specific circumstances, which they then need to back up with concrete examples and evidence times where they have effectively utilised these competences and applied certain skills. The interviewers can then ask further questions around the specific examples as required to explore the candidate's behaviours or skills.

What is STAR?

The acronym STAR stands for

- Situation
- Task
- Action
- Result.

How do you answer a competency based question using the STAR approach?

Step 1 – Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished. With the STAR approach you need to set the context. Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story. For example, if the question is asking you to describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult person, explain how you came to meet that person and why they were being difficult. If the question is asking for an example of teamwork, explain the task that you had to undertake as a team.

Step 2 – Action

This is the most important section of the STAR approach as it is where you will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain what you did. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

- Be personal, i.e. talk about you, not the rest of the team or others involved.
- Go into some detail. Do not assume that the interviewers will know anything about the example you are using or will be able to guess what you mean.
- Steer clear of technical information, unless it is crucial to your story.
- Explain **what** you did, **how** you did it, and **why** you did it.

What you did and how you did it

The interviewers will want to know how you reacted to the situation. This is where you can start selling some important skills. For example, you may want to describe how you used the team to achieve a particular objective and how you used your communication skills to keep everyone updated on progress etc.

Why you did it

For example; when discussing a situation where you had to deal with conflict, many candidates would simply say: “I told my colleague to calm down and explained to him what the problem was”. However, it would not provide a

good idea of what drove you to act in this manner. How did you ask him to calm down? How did you explain the nature of the problem? By highlighting the reasons behind your action, you would make a greater impact. For example:

"I could sense that my colleague was irritated and I asked him gently to tell me what he felt the problem was. By allowing him to vent his feelings and his anger, I gave him the opportunity to calm down. I then explained to him my own point of view on the matter, emphasising how important it was that we found a solution that suited us both."

This revised answer helps the interviewers understand what drove your actions and reinforces the feeling that you are calculating the consequences of your actions, thus retaining full control of the situation. It provides much more information about you as an individual and is another reason why the STAR approach is so useful.

Step 3 – Result

Explain what happened eventually – how it all ended. Also, use the opportunity to describe what you accomplished and what you learnt in that situation. This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills.

This is probably the most crucial part of your answer. Interviewers want to know that you are using a variety of generic skills in order to achieve your objectives. Therefore you must be able to demonstrate in your answer that you are taking specific actions because you are trying to achieve a specific objective and not simply by chance.

Preparing for a competency-based interview

Preparation is vital if you want to be able to answer all questions thrown at you without having to think too much on the spot on the day of the interview; it requires several steps:

1. Make sure that you understand which skills and competencies will be tested. It sounds obvious, but some person specifications can be a little vague and you will need to do some thinking in order to ensure that the examples that you will be using hit the spot. For example, your person specification may say that you need to have "good communication skills in dealing with third parties". For someone who works in customer service and is expected to handle complaints all day long, this will most likely involve a mix of empathy/understanding as well as an ability to be assertive in a nice way whenever required; however for someone applying for a commercial law post, this will most likely involve an ability to explain complex matters in a simple way, and not so much empathy. Understanding the requirements for the post, whether they are stated explicitly or not in the person specification is therefore crucial.

2. Identify examples from your past experience which you can use to demonstrate that you possess the skills and competencies that you are being asked to demonstrate. You do not have to find hyper complicated examples; in particular the outcome of the story does not have to be extraordinary; what matters most is that the role you played in reaching the outcome was substantial.
3. Learn to narrate the story using the STAR method. This means setting the scene, explaining how you handled the situation by placing the emphasis on your role, and detailing the outcome/result

Using the STAR method for an Application Form

In using the STAR method to answer competency based questions contained within an application form rather than within an interview setting, all of the above still applies.

Try to keep your written answers as concise as you can but ensure that there is sufficient information there and you have covered all of the elements you need to in order to use the example you have selected as effectively as possible.

APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLE: COMPETENCY BASED QUESTION / ANSWER

Example Competency Question:

Tell me about a time when you used your initiative to resolve a complex problem. What was involved and what actions did you take?

Using the STAR method, here is a sample answer:

Situation

Soon after joining my last company I discovered that the average time taken to complete a customer refund was 14 days. This was unacceptable and was taking up an excessive amount of agent time and resources.

Task

I was tasked with reducing this to 2 days with added benefit of saving time and resources. In addition, we were being flooded with a large volume of customer calls and negative feedback by e-mail with questions asking why it was taking so long to complete the refund. This was giving the company a bad reputation and ultimately our sales were suffering.

Action

The first thing I did was create a detailed brief that both analysed the problem and outlined the potential benefits of the newly proposed process. I devised a new process for dealing with refunds and I organised a project team whose task was to implement this new system. I set up a system for internal and external feedback and communication, ensuring that everyone involved was

on board and up to speed. I hand-picked four software companies who specialise in the system we needed and after having demonstration and on hands testing, selected our preferred supplier. Throughout the project's entirety, I successfully managed the team members, updating and revising project milestones as necessary and in the end delivered a system that performed superbly.

Result

I overcame every obstacle I encountered, improvised when necessary, and successfully implemented the new system on schedule and under budget. This new system allows my team to respond to and process customer refunds within the 2 day deadline. Even more pleasing was the fact that the Board of Directors awarded me a prize for top performing team leader as a result of this project